

# Foucault Studies

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## INTERVIEW

### Governing Liberal Societies – the Foucault Effect in the English-speaking World<sup>1</sup>

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**JD:** In the two volumes of his lectures of 1978 and 1979, we see Michel Foucault making a major intellectual change of direction, moving away from an analysis of power as the formation and production of individuals towards an analysis of governmentality, a concept invented to denote the ‘conduct of conducts’ of men and women, working through their autonomy rather than through coercion even of a subtle kind. Out of this concept and the extended analysis of political economy which provides the material for its elaboration, Foucault never produced a published work. He broke off this series of investigations to occupy himself up to his death in 1984 with the writing of two books, which were evidently closer to his heart, of a history of the subject passing by way of the *Care of the self* and the *Use of Pleasure* (Foucault 1989a 1989b). This however did not prevent this concept of governmentality from meeting with great success in the English-speaking world, in many ways stimulating there an intellectual dynamic more intense than in the case of his published works, which rapidly became classics and were treated as such and with the deference that status entailed, but not with the excitement which met the lectures on governmentality. In 1991, your volume *The Foucault Effect* (Burchell, Gordon, Miller 1991) set off this dynamic by centring the “effect” in question precisely on this notion of governmentality. But in France Foucault’s lectures on the subject were not published until 2004 and without at first arousing great interest. So what accounts for this singular success of Foucault’s reflection on governmentality in the Anglo-Saxon world?

**CG:** We had a few advantages in Britain. In the first place, Foucault in his lifetime was more easygoing about foreign translations of his interviews and lectures than he was about their publication or reprinting in France. There may also have been more

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<sup>1</sup> Translated with minor revisions from *Esprit*, Novembre 2007, 82-95: ‘Comment gouverner les sociétés libérales? L’effet Foucault dans le monde Anglo-Saxon’.

editorial latitude for juxtaposing this material with the work of people who were collaborating, virtually or actually, with Foucault. Some of Foucault's important later lectures and texts dealing with government were given in America and originally published there. In *The Foucault Effect* I was able to publish a summary, based on lecture notes and tapes, of his governmentality lectures: many people could certainly have done the same in France.

Secondly, there is the difference in the national political conjuncture. In France after 1981, the dominant preoccupation remained socialism rather than liberalism, whereas Foucault had seen the importance of liberalism as a political issue and (I believe) conceived his 1979 lectures partly in response to the conjuncture of the Left's 1978 electoral defeat at the hands of Giscard d'Estaing. It is reasonable to suppose he would not have greatly lamented the defeat of a Left coalition in which the Communist Party played a major role. Here Foucault presents neoliberalism as a modern political rationality worthy of attention and a certain intellectual respect, while commenting that democratic socialism for its part has failed to engender a distinctive governmental rationality. This seemed a prescient and pertinent observation to some of us in Britain who were entering in 1979 on 18 years of Conservative government, whereas in 1981 France was to enter on twenty years of mainly socialist government, endowed with the legacy of the "*trente glorieuses*", the three French post-war decades of notable socio-economic progress. Viewed from across the Channel, the French socialist governments seemed to be protecting, and indeed extending these enviable accomplishments, while a right-wing British government was busy dismantling the semi-corporatist post-war national system, and other English-speaking countries over the same period were getting a dose of the same medicine.<sup>2</sup>

**JD:** One can entirely accept this explanation of the success of governmentality studies in the Anglo-Saxon countries. There, neoliberalism triumphed and became an object of study whereas in France, given the relative dominance of the Socialist Party, we had to struggle for twenty years to produce a reflection on the social which uncoupled it from socialism and addressed it in terms of the governability of democracy. Showing that there existed an acceptable exit from socialism seemed to us more important than grasping the subtleties of liberalism as a political rationality. I have in mind a series of authors working to that agenda, including Robert Castel and myself, who were for a time close to Foucault, and others like Pierre Rosanvallon, who were not, who exemplify this national particularity of our relation to the question of government, in contrast to what you say about the destiny of that question in the English-speaking countries.

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<sup>2</sup> Though Thatcher had fallen from power by the time *The Foucault Effect* was published; in the 80s the British Left's preferred intellectual guide for the understanding of Thatcherism was Gramsci, not Foucault.

One can also wonder if the fact that Foucault's reflection was at odds with this French conjuncture might not have contributed to a certain hardening of his political stance in this terrain, a difficulty in positioning himself which led to abandoning this aspect of his reflection to concentrate on the care of the self? Because the context was a very delicate one : he had parted company with his "revolutionary" links without lapsing into the kind of political philosophy which he hated, the question of regime, of the State, of all those official objects which he had been so well able to bypass. It was also the moment when the circle of friends around him in the 70s broke up and he contented himself with a few close supporters. In a way you invented a French Foucauldian school which never existed, or no longer exists in France, but, with this "Foucault effect" where you assembled texts from this loose group of friends in the 70s, weren't you fabricating an artefact which gave the illusion in Anglo-Saxon countries of a dynamic which no longer existed in France.... and thereby managed to produce one in those countries? Hence my second question – what was it that led to this interest in governmentality there?

**CG:** It is quite true that in our volume we did not inform our readers about some political and personal disagreements between our authors, where we could not see that these were linked to a clear intellectual difference. My introduction to our book was (as I admitted) an attempt to construct a plane of consistence between the work of individuals who, in some cases, had never met, and in others were no longer collaborators or desiring to be perceived as such.<sup>3</sup> The fabrication of our artefact ended up taking some time, nearly a decade in all: Foucault's death in 1984 complicated and changed the terms of the project, which had been begun with his knowledge and approval, in various ways. Now that five volumes of Foucault's lectures from the 1970s have been published, however, one can more easily see how much of what became, for a time, a shared research programme was already well developed in his own work, in parts well before 1978.

As to Foucault's trajectory, I think it is with his 1976 lectures, at the latest, that he starts to distance himself from the militant ideal of the time. The discussion in those lectures of Sieyès and the Third Estate seems already to prefigure his later reflection on the formidable capabilities of liberalism as a political rationality. The intellectual path that led Foucault from the analysis of disciplines to that of governmentality is perfectly consistent, just as the theme of governmentality connects consistently in turn with his later themes of care of the self and truth-telling. Let's also remember that this 'late' Foucault, who is supposed to have retreated into solitary study of the Church fathers and the history of the sacraments of penitence, was also the treasurer of the French branch of Solidarnosc, engaged in public

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<sup>3</sup> Sylvain Meyet points out, accurately, that no contributor to our volume except Foucault himself and the editors explicitly uses the term 'governmentality'. *Travailler avec Foucault. Retours Sur Le Politique*, eds. Sylvain Meyet, Marie-Cécile Naves, Thomas Ribémont, L'Harmattan, Paris 2005.

discussion with the socialist trade union leader Edmond Maire, and in an institutional project with the law reformer and justice minister, Robert Badinter. It seems, as Michel Senellart rightly notes in his excellent editorial postface to the 1978-79 lectures, that Foucault's interest in liberalism and neoliberalism is very much connected, around 1978, with his support for the East European dissidents. There is a marked anticommunist context in his lectures of 1978-9.

I have always been surprised that there was so little contemporary resonance at the time in France for Foucault's work on governmentality. In 1979, Foucault said that he would work in the following years' lectures on the genealogy of political parties – especially, I believe, that of the French Socialist party. I suspect that he was discouraged from pursuing this plan by the limited success of his dialogue with friends in, or close to, the Socialist Party. Perhaps his anticommunism still posed too many problems. But there was never any sign that he had repudiated this series of analyses. In the following years, he encouraged and supported some young researchers he taught at Berkeley who did research into governmentality in America. At the time of his death, he had a book announced for publication with Editions du Seuil entitled *Le gouvernement de soi et des autres*.

I never thought that Foucault would have been in serious political disagreement with your work at around this time or indeed that you would be likely to dissent from his views about security and autonomy in the Welfare State, as set out in his discussion with Robert Bono of the CFDT. Indeed I tried to show that Foucault's analyses of liberalism were consistent with the approach of your *L'invention du social* (Donzelot [1984] 1994), notably in the lecture he gave in 1979 on Fergusson's *History of Civil Society* where he sees emerging a notion of society as a "transactional reality", a mobile surface of engagement between the practices of government and the universe of the governed which constantly tends to escape their grasp. Whereas he had clear political differences with Deleuze – who was another philosophical genius, but no genius in politics. Nowadays, as you know, there are many people in the world, academics in particular, who favour a Deleuzian Foucault interpreted by Antonio Negri, as there are people interested in governmentality studies. While the successive waves of posthumous publication and circulation of Foucault's work are reaching and inspiring new generations of readers, some of those who responded to his published work of the 70s and 80s may by now be looking elsewhere for stimulating novelty.

As for the results of English-speaking governmentality studies (not to speak of work in the rest of the world outside France), it is hard to give a short and summary answer. Nikolas Rose and Mitchell Dean published books which have been seen as aiming to systematise governmentality, to make it into a theoretical programme. But many people (and probably both of these authors) would deny that there is or was a 'governmentality school' in any clear-cut sense. Apart from the reference to a limited set of canonical texts by Foucault, there is typically a focus round the issue of

liberalism and liberty, signalling the need to take liberalism seriously as an intellectual force which is also subject to historical transformation. Some original fields of research have been developed, such as the work of Peter Miller on the genealogy of management, and of Paul Rabinow and Nikolas Rose on biotechnologies; links have been made with other approaches, notably with Latour and actor network theory, in work on “government at a distance”. James Tully, Duncan Ivison, Tom Osborne, Graham Burchell, and I have been interested in the affinities between Foucault’s works on governmentality and certain currents of English-language history of political thought, such as John Pocock’s work on civic republicanism. Then there is work by people who were taught by Foucault at Berkeley, including interesting studies of modern governmentality by David Horn and Keith Gandall, and Jonathan Simon’s important work on American penal justice. In recent years it is also becoming clearer that Foucault’s legacy, and particularly his work on governmentality, has had major international impacts in the rapidly changing disciplines of geography<sup>4</sup> and anthropology and the new and important sector of postcolonial studies.

Does this work imply a distinctive political orientation? In broad terms we are a loose faction in the post-New Left diaspora which is still in search of its moral and ideological identity; more particularly, an episode in the experience of a Left coming to terms with a fresh advent and partial triumph of liberalism. There is not much evidence of a direct impact of this body of work on the political domain. I am not aware that Blair ever read Foucault. Anthony Giddens, for a time the Blair-Clinton court philosopher, usually includes a caricatural account of Foucault only as a marginal item in his doctrinal digests. But I think parts of the formulae of Clinton and Blair for a ‘third way’ may have effectively carried out a form of the operation which Foucault might have been taken as challenging the socialists to contemplate – the selective incorporation, in an updated and corrected social democracy, of certain elements of neoliberal analysis and strategy. In some ways, it is the continuation of a trend initiated in the 70s by Schmidt in Germany, Giscard in France and Healey in Britain, and in her different way by Thatcher – the truth-telling role of government, in a world of global economic uncertainty and competition, as moral tutor of citizens in an ethic of enterprise and responsibility. The success of this formula in Britain seemed for a long time to be limited only by the irritability of citizens and the claims of the fourth estate, the media, to make and unmake governmental power (both of these reactions being severely aggravated, of course, by Blair’s extension of his governmental agenda to include the neoconservative enterprise of civilisational confrontation and global war on terror).

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<sup>4</sup> *Space, Knowledge and Power. Foucault and Geography*, ed. Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden, Ashgate 2007.

“Governmentality studies”, where they are identifiable as such, have been an academic activity governed by prevailing institutional and discursive norms; Foucault’s work, while inspiring to many, does not have the capacity to turn lead into gold. As part of this discursive order, there has been an ongoing discussion about which side such investigations are, or should be, on: that of a new rationalisation of government, or that of a critique of such rationality? No one has quite followed the trajectory of Francois Ewald, from a genealogy of social insurance to an ethical ontology of risk as the noble spirit of the enterprising class. All the same, the theme of governmentality has become involved in a debate where some are accused by others of seeking to legitimate, rather than to problematise, the idea of a “risk society” considered as the ineluctable contemporary form of collective reality which all citizens and governmental techniques are necessarily obliged to confront.

The reception of Foucault’s analysis of neoliberalism unfortunately often seems to be flattened into a set of polemical, ideological, and globalising generalities, dispensing with the kind of descriptive investigation Foucault undertook in 1979 of the different avatars of neoliberalism with their national, historical, and theoretical specificities. Indeed, neglect of post-war history seems to be a frequent feature of this polemical discourse: from a recent book on neoliberalism by David Harvey, a post-modern geographer who views Foucault’s work as obsolete, one might think that neoliberalism had been invented in the 1970s.

I hope the full publication of these lectures will revitalise this area of research. I think their publication will also show that this notion of governmentality can usefully be applied alongside Foucault’s earlier and later ideas (power/knowledge, discipline, government of self, perihelia). The theme of governmentality certainly needs to be seen in its continuity with the themes of the “late” or “final” Foucault (we are only talking here of an interval of five or six years): ethics, care of self, parrhesia or truth-telling, the conditions of existence of critical discourse. To understand these implications in full we will have to await the publication of the final lectures.

**JD:** After this harangue, I plunged into the “governmentality studies” for which you had pointed me to some of the key protagonists. And I emerged – at least for the moment – with mixed feelings of pleasure and unease.

The pleasure was especially in reading sections of the books co-edited and written by Nikolas Rose – *Foucault and Political Reason*, *The Powers of Freedom*, and the articles of Thomas Lemke. All of these show the pertinence of analysis in terms of governmentality in addressing neoliberalism. They all rely on the Foucauldian refutation of a fixed distinction between the domain of the State and the domain of civil society, between the domain of power and the domain of subjectivity. They use it to show that the “retreat of the State” which is supposed to constitute neoliberalism in fact corresponds to an extension of government.

This extension is made possible by replacing the direct government of society by the State with a form of government at a distance. There is a destatification of government which goes in hand with the appearance of social technologies which delegate responsibility for individuals to other autonomous entities: enterprises, communities, professional organizations, individuals themselves. The use of contractual agreements, defined of objectives, measures of performance, combined with local autonomy, allows this shift of responsibility to governmental action at a distance. In this perspective, "Individuals are to become "experts of themselves", to adopt an educated and knowledgeable relation of self-care in respect of their bodies, their minds, their forms of conduct and that of the members of their own families" (Rose in *Foucault and Political Reason* (1997, 59f)). Individuals become "entrepreneurs of themselves", and it is as such that they are bonded into society through the choices they make, the risks they take, and the responsibilities for themselves and others which thereby arise and which they are required to assume. Citizenship is consequently no longer exercised in a relationship with the State or within a public space (such a space becoming indeed difficult to discern as such), so much as a varied range of private, corporate or quasi-public practices, ranging from work to consumption: "the consumer citizen becomes an active agent in the regulation of professional expertise; the prudent citizen becomes an active agent of security, the citizen as employee becomes an active agent in the regeneration of industry" (ibid.)

It is at this point, at this equation of the simultaneous growth of individual autonomy and responsibility – one believes oneself autonomous: what is worse, one is; but this autonomy is designed to make us into agents of the system – that my unease begins. Not because the analysis is false – I entirely endorse it as a necessary stage, as far as it does – but because it is presented as sufficient, whereas the underlying questions start just at the point where it stops, sure of itself and of its intellectual effect. The sophisticated social technologies of advanced neoliberal society, it tells us, contain an enlarged component of freedom along with an enlarged component of required responsibility in comparison with those of the Welfare State. Just as the latter marked an advance on old-style political economy, so political economy had represented a move beyond the model of reason of state. Each new model is evaluated only against the performance of its predecessor: they are always analysed at their 'technical' level, never in terms of a political criterion or in terms of value. This is the cost of the ability of governmentality studies to describe the materiality of social technologies while avoiding, for instance, the habitual denunciations of neoliberalism as an ideological rhetoric designed to mask a false economic theory and a practical anti-humanism, as Marxists and antiglobalisers like to put it. But doesn't the avoidance of that kind of simplification lead, in its turn, to a central ambivalence at the core of this kind of analysis? Isn't that what you yourself point out when you say that this kind of analysis can lead either to a critique of political rationality or to a rationalisation of this same set of policies?

In terms of political rationalities, in France we can all think of Francois Ewald's celebration of risk written from his current standpoint as a leading official of the national employers' organization. This is a classic case of counter-transference where the analyst falls blindly in love with his object, in this case the technology of insurance, and finds in it the key to all problems of social and political life.

But the other standpoint, the critique of political rationality, can be no less irritating when it is presented as a self-sufficient conclusion. I will give two examples which have struck me from my recent remedial reading course in governmentality studies.

The first is from Nikolas Rose's book *Powers of Freedom*. In a chapter called "the community-civility game", he tries to establish a parallel between Bentham's famous Panopticon and the virtues claimed for it by Bentham in terms of preserving morality, stimulating industry and spreading education, and the qualities attributed to the notion of community promoted by authors like Etzioni, Putnam, Fukuyama and Belloc (already a somewhat hastily amalgamated group), or with that of the idea of associational networks considered as new diagrams of power, promoting "moral" conducts in likewise subtly imperious ways. The "we" of community is shown as exercising a technico-moral authority akin to that of the penitentiary Panopticon. At a stroke the Foucauldian analysis of governmentality as "conduct of conducts", as action at a distance, loses its distinction from the disciplinarising techniques of the 19th century. But more serious is the way this assimilation serves the cultivation of a posture of radical critique.

In Barbara Cruikshank's analysis of the function of the notion of empowerment in the USA, I found this same inclination to adopt a posture of radical critique at the cost of losing the subtle capabilities inherent in of this notion of the 'conduct of conducts'. When she denounces the invitation to self-empowerment, she is not so far from our own Jean Baudrillard and his celebration of the inertia of the silent majority as a form of resistance to the modern injunctions to participation and expression. One needs to be aware that she is analysing Californian "Welfare to work" programmes which are more systems of forced labour under harsh conditions than steps to the empowerment of individuals over themselves or in their relation with others: whereas this theme of empowerment does also and above all have a dimension of acquisition of power over oneself thanks to the power which the collective one belongs to is able to produce. The collective in this case is not thought of as demanding a sacrifice from the individual, but rather as a necessary support for individual self-affirmation. But the choices as examples of these caricatural initiatives may also serve as indicating a wish to cultivate an exclusively critical posture.

One can also wonder if this ambivalence of these analyses in terms of governmentality may not lead them to incline towards one side or the other, the critical or the laudatory side, depending on the location where it is conducted. In Anglo-Saxon countries where neoliberalism was imposed from the start of the 80s, Foucault studies provide the means of a sophisticated critique, albeit one which is



visibly lacking a capacity to propose alternatives. Does this political ambivalence in the notion of governmentality not condemn it to serving an ideological function, determined by political circumstance, whereas it aspires to be precisely the antidote of an ideological reading of forms of government?

**CG:** One negative feature of the Foucauldian diaspora is that people can be seduced by the idea of revealing the truth of the present, but this is can be contaminated by a taste for hyperbolic discourses which exceed any critical purchase on the real. The leading example of this is no doubt the work Giorgio Agamben, who detects in all government a virtual programme of extermination, and views the condition of the governed as universal reduction to the condition of *homo sacer*, and the like-minded commentators who in the UK see every Blairite innovation in the policing of families as a step on the road to serfdom.

As for the question behind your question, that is to say Foucault's critical standpoint vis-à-vis governmentality in terms of its potentiality for progressive technical invention, I suggest this brings us back to the distinctive quality of liberalism itself. Foucault says that the liberal art of government consists in the production and consumption of freedom, the creation and destruction of freedom. It is (as some say) the government of freedom and (as others remind us) the government of unfreedom<sup>5</sup> – or rather, the government of a freedom which is itself an unfreedom. Liberals (Keynes and Beveridge) were architects of the Welfare State: other liberals have been its critics and reformers. It is the paradox of liberalism in all its forms (neo, advanced, post...) that much action is necessary before one can *laisser faire* – action even to the extent of acting to bring into existence the reality (freedom, society) which it is desired to *laisser faire* – “*faire société*”, as indeed you have it in the title of your recent book. Hence, one might partly counter some of your reproaches by saying that this kind of analysis brings out the ambiguity and ambivalence of liberal realities, in advance of any question of the practical consequences one chooses – or fails to choose – to infer from the analysis.

The detached, Weberian value-freedom of Foucault's description of the constitutive operations of liberalism as a governmentality may look to some like a disarming of the power of critique. You are asking whether and how, having unlearned the easy rhetoric of denunciation, one can then reintroduce a pertinent basis for critical evaluation.

In the first place, the very experience of a degree of discomfort at the paradoxes, antinomies and aporias of liberal liberty may help lead to healthy lucidity rather than moral incapacitation. Further, this element of detachment does not prevent, but even encourages the introduction of certain counter-analyses within the

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<sup>5</sup> Hindess, B. (2001) 'The Liberal Government of Unfreedom', *Alternatives: Social Transformation and Humane Governance*, 26: 93-111.

terms of the liberal paradigm: for instance, the theory of social capital invented by Robert Putnam (that is, of the resources which individuals draw from relational networks of solidarity and local and private forms of mutual support), or again, in relation to the Lockean theory of self-ownership as the necessary foundation of the liberal economy, the requirement that each person be endowed with the necessary resources to enable that self-ownership to be effective in practice (as Robert Castel argues in his recent book on *Social Insecurity*, in terms interestingly similar to those of Amartya Sen's work on "capability rights").

Having said this, many who work in governmental studies do not feel called upon to take up the tasks you propose to them. In the book you quote, Nikolas Rose writes that in this type of work the aim is to destabilize and think beyond "all those claims made by others to govern us in the name of our own well-being", and that studies of governmentality "do not try to put themselves at the service of those who would govern better" [59-60]. This sounds like a form of knowledge which wants to serve only on the side of contestation. However, while recognising the critical contribution which his analyses have indeed made, others might wish at least to qualify those statements of position (which Nikolas himself firmly refuses to assert as group doctrines). Because it is hard to see why it should be a necessary axiom of the study of governmentality that all government (even one which claims to take account of the good of the governed) is an evil in itself, or that the wish to govern better should necessarily be something from which one ought ethically to disassociate oneself. Certainly, Foucault himself said that critique is not obliged to harness itself to the programming of a reform designed only to maintain an existing relation of forces, but he also said that in talking with a government one can be "*debout et en face*" – that is, engage in dialogue as an independent and equal interlocutor. In this view of things, critique, struggle, discussion and collective invention are compatible and complementary tasks. I suppose that it was not out of pure malice that Foucault suggested to the French Socialists in 1979 the project to invent a governmentality of their own; he indeed subsequently showed some evidence of willingness to assist with that task.

The seductive element in Foucault's rereading of liberalism was the thought that the art of better government was presented as the art of governing less, and that in this sense liberalism forms an autocritique of governmental reason: a governmentality which develops and corrects itself through its own critique. Alongside this there was his other seductive notion of critique (inspired by Kant's definition of Enlightenment as an emancipation from tutelage) as an indocility of the governed, a will not to be governed so much or in such a way. That is where the permanent task of critique would demand an inventive sequel: how to govern in order to be governed less, how to govern in order to be governed or to govern oneself in the way one wishes? Here we meet Foucault's refusal of the double blackmail, by the policy experts for whom a critique is invalidated if not

accompanied by a prescription for reform, and by those who use the converse charge of recuperation, for whom every unprejudiced discussion of what is possible or desirable comes down to a capitulation of critique before the status quo.<sup>6</sup>

It is true that most of us have remained at a certain distance from the attempts, in the English-speaking world as in France, to “remoralise” politics through the injection of new or revived doctrines of civic and democratic virtue. Some thinkers, like William Connolly and James Tully, have made interesting attempts to incorporate values of difference and multiplicity in political ethics. My reading of your recent book *Faire société* suggests to me that you also subscribe to that general project.

Why have we kept our distance from these initiatives (apart from the consideration that today’s civic pedagogues are sometimes too easily recognisable as recycled revolutionary ideologues)? For heuristic reasons Foucault drew a distinction between his field of research on governmental practices and the history of the political doctrine of sovereignty and its legitimate foundation, the history of citizens and their rights. This may have been initially necessary and effective as a means to establish and make visible a new object of study (except in respect of making that new object visible to historians of political thought), but I think it is time now for a more connected approach so that we can look, for instance, at what relation there might be between a certain notion of citizenship and a certain way of being governed<sup>7</sup>. This might help us to think more effectively about what we are becoming and what we wish or do not wish to become.

Another benefit of Foucault’s initiative which has been noticed recently is that it anticipates the effects of globalisation in relativising the status of national state institutions.<sup>8</sup> It surprised me that François Ewald and Blandine Kriegel said recently that Foucault was concerned with problems of his time and that now we have other concerns. Foucault’s concerns in his later years seem to me to include notably neoliberalism, Islam, security, ethics, and the rights and global solidarity of the governed, all issues which I think we still recognise as pertinent today.

**JD:** I agree with this idea that the concept of governmentality has a prescient value in relation to globalisation, because it registers, in a sense in advance, the relativisation of States and nations, and I would also see in this advantage an enhanced possibility of linking the “technical :” analysis of governmentality with the ‘moral’ analysis of forms of citizenship corresponding to this new historical context.

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<sup>6</sup> To state what may be obvious: Foucault’s insistence on recognising the critical and anti-essentialist components of liberalism and neoliberalism does not mean that these doctrines are therefore to be considered as the permanent homeland of critical thinking in general.

<sup>7</sup> As early as *Histoire de la Folie*, Foucault had identified the modern political problem of reconciling the two incarnations of the citizen, the “man of law” and the “man of government”.

<sup>8</sup> Cf. W Larner and W Walters eds. *Global Governmentality. Governing International Spaces*. (2004)

The analysis of neoliberal governmentality shows a common orientation of developed countries striving to adapt to new realities. This orientation involves reducing the direct role of States in the economy and social relations, in favour of a new economy of social relations which emphasises autonomy and individual responsibility at all the local levels where autonomy and responsibility can be brought into interaction. In this sense, neoliberal governmentality is indeed a pure "technical" product of critiques addressed to the Welfare State for the past forty years: left critics denouncing the creation in the name of progress of an order ever more disposed to control individuals, reducing their effective autonomy under the guise of an enhanced solicitude, and critics on the right who indicted the dismantling of the order necessary for progress through the deresponsibilising of individuals living under the increasing care of the State. The difficulty of sustaining an ever-rising burden of State revenues without affecting the global competitiveness of enterprises prompted governments to use and play off these two critiques against each other, to counter the growth of demands and recriminations addressed at the State.

The 'civic' question is so little foreign to this 'technical' solution that it arises out of the very fact of its application. For it is all very well to govern at a distance, relegating to the local level the play of encounters between the needs for autonomy and the demand for responsibility. That still requires that these "localities", these diverse groupings, communities, enterprises, collectivities, form a society, and are not too disparate, too mutually estranged, too indifferent to anything outside of their own destiny, too incapable of a shared appreciation of what is right and just for all members of these constructed collectivities. Here there arises the question of consent to shared institutions, and therefore to the shared costs they impose. This consent is a form of civic engagement (*civisme*), its abstract incarnation, which we can counterpose to the direct mutual trust of people and citizens within the local frame of the specific community where they live.

Trust and consent are two relative values, the balance of whose roles can vary in the production of a civic society. They are in some sense the equivalents for citizenship of what autonomy and responsibility represent in the context of governmentality. They call for a similar concern for their mutual adjustment – what is the right relation of these two registers to permit the establishment of a civic society? And the intersection of these two registers, the "technical" register of autonomisation and responsibility, and the "civic" relation of consent and trust determines the way the concern for governmental effectiveness succeeds or fails to connect with the realisation of a civic society. Bringing together these two demands allows us to pose the question of how to make society exist in the context of neoliberalism. It seems to me that Europe is the place *par excellence* for the search for equilibrium between these two lines of transformation, the one which affects the governed and the one which affects the citizen.

**CG:** Consent and trust and also, if possible, respect, are certainly things which every government today desires to produce and to enjoy – respect being incidentally the item which others most like to deny government, at least in Britain. The production of respect demands, in turn, persuasion and pedagogy. Persuasion for the social classes which are resistant to change because they feel insecure, and pedagogy for the minorities who may be inclined to disorder or revolt. On these subjects, alongside Foucault's accounts of the pastoral function of government it is worth reading Paul Veyne's essay on the irritability of the governed, "When the individual is fundamentally affected by the power of the State" (*Economy and Society*, Vol. 34, No. 2, May 2005, translated by Graham Burchell). Veyne explains how Roman opinion was humiliated and violated by the spectacle of a ruler, the emperor Nero, who forced the ruled to serve as the audience of an aesthetic performance. In Britain we until recently had a political leader who was the great tenor of what you yourself in the 80s dubbed the coming 'civilisation of change': the man of truth as 'change-maker', telling the truth of global competitive modernity and the consequent obligation of all and each to be changed. But, just as Foucault taught us, it transpires that people can resist anything, even governmental *parrhesia*, even the pedagogy of reality and the ethic of change. The man of change and truth was not assassinated, but he was accused by a vocal segment of public opinions of being a corrupter and a liar. No governmentality will abolish resistance to government.

Could the currents of work and reflection we have been discussing contribute to the formation of a European political culture? "It would be a good idea", as Gandhi said of Western civilisation. Foucault talked perhaps less about the common market than the social market (expect perhaps in that enigmatic question in one of his 1976 lectures: "and what if Rome, once again, were to conquer revolution?"): is anyone writing the history of the linkage between those two themes? <sup>9</sup>

Foucault sketched the 20th-century international transfers (sometimes covert, often mediated by emigration and exile) of neoliberal techniques and formulae, much as he had outlined the international movement of ideas around 1900 on crime, security and social defence. It would be interesting today to continue this kind of analysis, tracing for instance the transfer between national and political camps of notions and techniques of social exclusion and inclusion.

Perhaps we need to enlarge our thinking even beyond the still growing European space. It is worth noting that the global (at least Anglophone) impact of the

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<sup>9</sup> It is interesting that in his 1979 lectures on liberalism Foucault cites Kant's *Perpetual Peace* on the cosmopolitan right, prescribed by nature, of global free trade. "The guarantee of perpetual peace is, in effect, commercial globalisation (*la planétarisation commerciale*)" [2004, 60: my translation]. Cf. W Walters and J H Haahr, *Governing Europe. Discourse, Governmentality and European Integration* (2005).

notion and theme of governmentality has coincided and in several cases interacted with the growth of the new discipline of postcolonial studies. The relation between proponents of postcolonial studies and Foucault's work have been, in a somewhat similar way to the situation in feminist studies, contested and often contestatory; sometimes one has the impression of a generation of fractious and needy orphans, afraid of their own freedom, who cannot forgive Foucault for failing to write their books as well as his, or for only having written the books he lived to write; nevertheless, the encounter has led to some beginnings of analyses of colonial and post- or neo-colonial styles of governmentality.<sup>10</sup> Perhaps we are also seeing the beginnings of a new analysis of the question which preoccupied Foucault, along with neoliberalism, in 1978-9, namely "Islamic government", together with the now very current question of the possible civil and political modes of existence of Muslim citizens in societies with a liberal regime of government. If a European political culture was capable of accommodating and welcoming such reflections, it would be a step forward for Europe and the world.

*Translated by Colin Gordon*

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<sup>10</sup> For a useful survey see Steven Legg, "Beyond the European Province: Foucault and Postcolonialism" In Jeremy Crampton and Stuart Elden (Eds) *Space, Knowledge, and Power: Foucault and Geography (op. cit.)*

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